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Organización  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the Third Award Ceremony  
of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use  
of Information and Communication Technologies in Education**

**UNESCO, 14 January 2009**

Minister,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Ambassador,  
Mr President of the International Jury,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to this third award ceremony for the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education.

Established in 2005 thanks to a generous donation by His Majesty the King of Bahrain, this prize rewards outstanding projects that use ICTs to enhance learning, teaching and overall educational performance. It consists of a diploma and a 50,000 dollars award, to be divided equally between two laureates.

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to Dr Majed Bin Ali Al-Noaimi, Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Chairman of the Bahrain National Commission for UNESCO, who was instrumental in establishing the prize. Minister Al-Noaimi is a great friend of UNESCO and has done much to promote the growing collaboration between his country and this Organization.

Most recently, he led the way for the creation of a regional centre for ICTs under the aegis of UNESCO in Manama. I had the honour to sign the agreement establishing this state-of-the art facility with Minister Al-Noaimi last November in Geneva, on the

sidelines of the International Conference on Education. The centre will do much to advance the work of this prize in fostering inclusive knowledge societies where everyone has access to the fruits of education and technology.

It is also my pleasure to welcome Dr Naser Al Belooshi, the new Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to UNESCO. I look forward to working with you, and to expanding this collaboration yet further.

Last but not least, let me welcome the President of the International Jury for the Prize, Dr Paul Resta, as well as the other members of the Jury who join us today. Thank you for your hard work and commitment.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the turn of the new millennium, the international community made a collective commitment to provide quality education to all by 2015. Despite remarkable gains in many countries, progress overall has been slow and uneven. The *2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report* reveals major inequalities in educational opportunity both between and within countries. It shows that on current trends, at least 29 million children will still be out of school in 2015 and around 700 million adults will still lack basic literacy skills. It also shows that if we want to make a dent in these numbers, we must do more to improve education quality. Today, far too many young people in developed and developing countries alike drop out of school or leave without basic qualifications.

More than halfway toward the deadline, it is clear that the international community must redouble its efforts to bridge this vast gulf in educational opportunity. In this, we need to draw on policies and practices that work and have had proven success. The fuller and more effective use of ICTs will be an important part of this strategy.

The recent International Conference on Education, which looked at ways of making education systems more inclusive, highlighted the role of ICTs in expanding access, especially in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas.

ICTs can also enhance education quality by making the learning experience more interactive and relevant. Communication technologies can improve monitoring and assessment. In particular, they can help countries to fill the massive gap in qualified

teachers, which the EFA High-Level Group has recognized as one of the major obstacles to EFA. An additional 18 million primary school teachers will be needed by 2015. To fill this gap, we must do more to harness the potential of ICTs to support teacher training and professional development.

The prize-winning projects we celebrate here today offer excellent examples of how new technologies, when introduced in a coherent and sustainable way, can help to overcome the educational divide and improve quality.

In the three years since its creation, the prize has gained well-deserved international recognition. An impressive 67 projects from 47 countries were submitted for this year's edition, the theme of which is "Digital Opportunities for All: Preparing Students for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills".

The International Jury, which held its meeting last year in Manama for the first time, at the kind invitation of the University of Bahrain, proposed two prize-winners and two honourable mentions for my approval. I had no hesitation in accepting their recommendations.

Let me therefore express my great pleasure in announcing our two prize-winners:

The first is **Shanghai TV University of China**, which is rewarded for its programme "Turning the Digital Divide into Digital Opportunity: The Project for Building the Digital Lifelong Learning System in Shanghai". This initiative reaches 230 community learning centres in the Shanghai area. It is exemplary both in its quality and its scale. Through satellite and network systems, the project brings high-quality digital educational resources to remote and underdeveloped regions in China. There are now plans to use the programme to assist African and Asian countries in developing lifelong learning systems.

Our second prize-winner is **Dr Hoda Baraka, of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Egypt**. Dr Baraka is rewarded for her leadership of several national ICT projects aimed at enhancing education quality, combating illiteracy, and increasing access to learning, especially in remote areas. These include the project "Toward Ubiquitous Reachability to All Learners", which provides a series of exemplary programmes designed to expand digital opportunities to learners across Egypt. A second project, the Egyptian Education Initiative, covers

2,000 schools, 17 public universities and 1,000 information technology clubs. It has provided training to over 64,000 teachers and is training a further 45,000 teachers and administrators in digital literacy.

I am also pleased to announce the recipients of the two honourable mentions.

The first goes to the **Schools Online Curriculum Services of Western Australia's Department of Education and Training**, which has developed an Online Teaching Learning System to help teachers plan, deliver and monitor learning activities in line with Western Australia's Curriculum Framework. The system enables teachers to assess and provide feedback on student activities, develop online communities of practice, and build a central repository of digital learning materials.

The second honourable mention goes to the **One Laptop Per Child programme of the Ministry of Education of Peru**, which aims to provide teachers and students in rural elementary schools with XO laptop computers. So far, over 3,000 schools have been equipped with more than 25,000 computers and 115,000 teachers have been trained to meet the needs of over 2.7 million students. In its next phase, the project will reach 200,000 more students and 9,000 more teachers, helping to develop a flexible, inclusive and interactive learning environment that stimulates creative and critical thinking.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my warm congratulations and encouragement for these excellent initiatives. The projects celebrated here today give us confidence that the challenges of building more inclusive education systems that serve both individual and social aspirations can be overcome. Let them serve as an inspiration to us all.

Thank you very much.